

altered that environment to its own uses. I hope that this will result in a broader and a deeper understanding of the manner in which an old culture, subject to frequent changes, with a long history of settlement, has, through its social organization, used and is using its chief resources, the cultivated land, the fish in the seas, the deep stones imbedded in its earth, its forests, and its waters. 121 311

There were certain obstacles in carrying out this plan. As everyone knows who has attempted such tasks, after the first few days the apparent simplicities of village life vanish before one's eyes, and he is left with a mass of observations whose ramifications lead in every direction. There is simply no limit to the courses of inquiry which these "simple" villages open up. 121

There was the problem of distinguishing between what was customary and carried on for this reason and what was of basic living importance in the culture. This difficulty disappears for those who believe that every trait has some significance if it has survived, but this neglects the point that many beliefs and customs belong to segments of a population. To one group what may be done as a matter of form may be of close personal importance to another. Both points are significant, for to do what one is expected to do, even if a pure form, is in itself a fact of importance. This applies especially to religious observances and anniversaries in honor of the dead. In some cases, they seemed perfunctorily performed, particularly among the young and the better educated. The survival of certain beliefs is due to their preservation by segments of the population, and women seem to be the chief carriers of the devotional and religious tradition. Real differences, too, seem to lie in age groups, with the dividing line at about fifty-five to sixty years. Many under this age have little understanding of the history or traditional culture. The old, and particularly the old women, have carried on. 121 183 184 [562] [561]

Observation in itself is deceptive. Even the grasses, shrubs, and pine trees on the hillsides seem to be a more or less permanent part of the natural environment. Yet these were greatly changed during the war and in local areas grasses have succeeded to places formerly occupied by the pines. 121

The information was obtained in the following manner. (1) Personal conversations in the Japanese language with residents of the villages. Much of the information was secured by accompanying people to their work, attending their parties, visiting shops, rice and sugar mills, and asking questions about the things seen. (2) Direct personal observation, supplemented by conversations to check the accuracy and the significance of these observations. (3) Information gathered from village land records, statistics, land maps, and family registers. Later there was considerable difficulty in securing comparability in the statistics. For this reason the attempt to present quantitative data was in some cases abandoned in favor of a general qualitative description. (4) General discussions with the personnel of the Civil Affairs Administration and with Okinawans. (5) Personal impressions, but these have been included only when they are based on repeated observation. (6) In the historical and general 121 ● 129